

Planning Commission

Staff Report

August 30, 2007



Case: 9503 and 9514

Project Name: SoBro Neighborhood Plan

Applicant: Louisville Metro Government

Representative: Louisville Metro Planning and Design Services

Jurisdiction: Louisville Metro

Council District: 6 (Unsel)

Case Manager: Steve Sizemore, Planner I

Request:

Review the draft of the SoBro Neighborhood plan (9503) and its Executive Summary for adoption as an amendment to Cornerstone 2020 (9514)

Background

The pre-planning phase for the SoBro Neighborhood Plan began in Fall 2004, with Planning and Design Services staff leading this effort, working in conjunction with District 6 Metro Councilman George Unseld's office. The task force for the SoBro plan was appointed by Mayor Jerry Abramson in September 2004, and the first task force meeting was held in November of 2004. The Center for Neighborhoods was chosen as the consultant for this plan to lead the task force, develop the plan components and produce the first draft of the plan document. Other firms and entities contributed to the components, including John Milner Associates (existing conditions analysis), Zimmerman/Volk Associates (housing market analysis), and the Urban Design Studio (urban design analysis). Two neighborhood public meetings were held on January 12, 2006 (workshop) and June 14, 2007.

In accordance with Planning and Design's neighborhood plan model, it is mandatory that every neighborhood plan contains a Land Use/Community Form and a Mobility component. The SoBro plan focuses primarily on these two required components with additional attention paid to housing, urban design, and open space. Due to demand for comprehensive strategies for each of these components, they appear in the plan as their own chapters.

Hearing date: August 30, 2007

Case #(s): 9503

Page 1 of 5

General Comments

The SoBro Neighborhood Plan is unique in comparison to previous neighborhood plans presented to the Planning Commission in the past two years. The differentiation stems from the fact that SoBro is a downtown neighborhood without the representation of residential or business associations consistent in other planning efforts. However, the stakeholders involved in the process expressed their vision and desire to see a more cohesive and identifiable neighborhood. SoBro has many identified strengths such as location, various institutions, the Public Library, street network, and infill opportunities. These ingredients contribute to the area's great potential and provide a solid foundation for realizing the vision set forth in the plan.

The purpose of the plan is to identify strategies that capitalize on the area's strategic location as a crossroads between the downtown core and historic Old Louisville. While the process involved stakeholders from within the study area, a significant amount of input came from those representing downtown and Old Louisville. The land use tools identified in the plan aim to bring together the various stakeholders to develop an area that has a form and character that is compatible with its surrounding districts. It is important to note that these recommendations are not intended to exclude current land uses, but rather to provide the means for a more flexible land use strategy that can adjust to emerging market trends in the downtown area.

Staff Recommendation

Recommendations from the SoBro plan can be grouped into three categories: Cornerstone 2020/Land Development Code; Infrastructure/Capital Improvements; and Policy-Programmatic. Only the recommendations related to Cornerstone 2020/Land Development Code are included in the Executive Summary of the plan and are ultimately intended for adoption as an amendment to Cornerstone 2020.

Cornerstone 2020/LDC Recommendations

The following recommendations from the SoBro plan are related specifically to Cornerstone 2020/LDC:

C1, C2, C3, C4, C5

Staff Comments/Recommendations:

The above listed recommendations are recommended for approval by staff. Recommendation C1 calls for the extension of the Downtown Form District south to Kentucky Street, east to I-65 and west to 9th Street at Cawthon. Staff supports this recommendation and feels that this extension is a necessary tool to provide

Hearing date: August 30, 2007

Case #(s): 9503

Page 2 of 5

the area with the guidance and flexibility to be more compatible with the character of the adjacent downtown district and Old Louisville neighborhood. Downtown form for SoBro would permit the mix of high-density residential, retail and service commercial and institutional uses compatible with existing and adjacent districts' land uses. During the planning process, there was consensus on this item among the various stakeholders in the affected area.

Recommendation C2, which calls for rezoning the aforementioned area to a Planned Development District (PDD), is complementary to this item. The uses and design guidelines of the district will be developed in a future process; however the Land Use/Community Form chapter provides the guidance for the future planning effort.

Recommendation C3 involves the area referred to as SoBro "southwest" (also referred to as the "panhandle" or "dog-leg".) This has traditionally been an area of mixed residential and industrial uses. Over recent decades, this section has seen a decline in both uses; however, several viable industries continue to operate and have expressed no intention to modify their current situation. In addition to recognizing the industrial and commercial properties' needs, staff also recognizes the desire of stakeholders in the adjacent Old Louisville neighborhood to see a shift in the southwest section to become more residential. This dichotomy presents a challenging planning scenario. Therefore, the recommendation of the plan is to convene all stakeholders in a future planning process where the details of Planned Development District are determined, These details will be specified as area-specific uses, transitional standards, and gradations in intensity between uses. Factors that will determine the appropriate land use patterns go beyond vested interest of the area's stakeholders, including, but not limited to issues such as transportation network and brownfield issues. In addition, planning efforts in this area of SoBro should rely upon findings in the future planning of the adjacent Park Hill area currently in its early phases through the Louisville Metro Economic Development Department.

Infrastructure Recommendations:

The following recommendations from the SoBro plan are related specifically to Infrastructure/Capital Improvements:

I1, I2, I3

Staff Comments/Recommendations:

The above listed recommendations are recommended for approval by staff.

Policy-Programmatic:

The following recommendations from the SoBro plan are related specifically to Policy-Programmatic issues.

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9

Staff Comments/Recommendations:

The above listed recommendations are recommended for approval by staff. The importance of Recommendation P6 must be highlighted as a significant contributor to SoBro's future potential success. The full implementation of many of the other more programmatic recommendations will depend on the degree that this item is fulfilled.

Staff Findings

The following Guidelines of Cornerstone 2020 Plan Elements support the listed recommendations contained in the SoBro Neighborhood Plan. (See plan document for specific language of each recommendation.)

Guideline 1 Community Form/Land Use

C1, C2, C3, C4, C5

Guideline 2 Centers

C1

Guideline 3 Compatibility

C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, I1, P2, P7

Guideline 4 Open Space

C5, I1

Guideline 6 Economic Growth and Sustainability

C1, C2, C3, P8, P9

Guideline 7: Circulation

I3, P3, P4

Guideline 8: Transportation Facility Design

I3, P4

Guideline 9: Bicycle, Pedestrian and Transit

P4

Guideline 10: Flooding and Stormwater

P9

Guideline 13: Landscape Character

C5, I1

Guideline 15: Community Facilities

C5

Attached Documents / Information

Attached is the comprehensive plan guidelines discussed within the staff findings.

Notification

This request was noticed in accordance with KRS 100 requirements. Staff also informed those parties specifically interested in this neighborhood plan as well as registered neighborhood groups.